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The Under Secretary

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November 19, 1962

TO: The Secretary
The Under Secretary ✓
G - The Deputy Under Secretary

THROUGH: S/S/3

FROM: S/P - W. W. Bestow

SUBJECT: Report Number Eight of the Planning Subcommittee

1. The Planning Subcommittee met on Friday morning, November 16. It did not attempt to assess the present stage of the negotiations but noted that the danger still remained that the Soviet Union could achieve a part of its basic objectives if it emerged with a continuing voice in hemispheric affairs, either direct or indirect, through the UN; or if the no-invasion commitment seriously hindered our efforts to continue to isolate Communist Cuba and work towards Castro's downfall.

2. The main purpose of the meeting was to review the following papers: "Possible Effects of Cuban Crisis on Future Soviet Military Posture & Policy Implications for the US" (Wolfe-Marshall paper); "Possible Soviet Military Reactions to the Cuban Outcome: Gimmicks and Programs" (CIA); "Some Lessons from Cuba" (ISA November 14, 1962, draft).

3. The discussion of the first two papers assumed, for purposes of clarity, that Moscow would not now move seriously towards arms control and disarmament but would seek to redress what it appears to regard as a dangerous weakness in the nuclear position. It was judged necessary for us systematically to examine the alternatives open to the Soviet Union in seeking to achieve a better and politically more effective nuclear balance; to heighten

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our intelligence effort with special reference to the signals which would suggest in which direction the Soviet Union intended to go; to consider any forms of insurance the US might wish immediately to take out as a contingency against possible specific Soviet courses of action (e.g., weapons and space); and, finally, to consider what courses of US behavior from the present forward were likely to influence Soviet action in ways least harmful to the US interest. After extended discussion, the two military papers were referred to ISA which (under Task 1a in Report Number Five) is undertaking a post-Cuba military reassessment which is now scheduled to be available as of December 1, in order to permit its conclusions to enter into budget calculations for the next fiscal year.

4. Special attention was given to the possibility of the Soviets seeking to achieve a retrieval of their situation -- politically and, to some extent, militarily -- by space spectaculars and the generation of what would appear (or actually be) an orbital bombardment capability. It was noted that the USIS is making a special assessment of this possibility.

5. A further discussion then took place, focussed on the failure of the national security community as a whole to predict the emplacement within Cuba of offensive weapons.

6. It was noted:

a. That the Soviet adventure fell into the category of "unusual" actions; that is, Soviet initiatives involving a higher degree of risk than was normal in their efforts to extend Soviet power. The pace of Soviet rearmament after the war, the attack on South Korea, the development of the 100 megaton bomb were judged other "unusual" actions which the intelligence community had failed to predict. In assessing these cases of "unusual" behavior, it was also noted that: (i) in the cases of Korea and Cuban missiles, Moscow also failed to predict our reaction; and (ii) certain possible "unusual" actions by the

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materialized; e.g., a full-scale exploitation of their ICBM technical potential.

b. One hypothesis considered which might explain their "unusual" action in Cuba was that they felt their nuclear, Berlin, and underdeveloped areas policies had been waning in the past year and that the possibility of emplacing offensive weapons in Cuba was an extraordinary and, perhaps, unique opportunity to redress their position in all three of these major dimensions of Khrushchev's policy. Perhaps this combination of prior frustration and tempting opportunity had led to the recent ill-fated "unusual" initiative.

c. The danger of intelligence evaluations becoming controlled by the ruling view of probable Soviet intentions (as dramatized in Roberta Wohlstetter's book on Pearl Harbor) was discussed. It was agreed that the intelligence community should seek consciously to correct for the following danger: that what was selected from the flow of current intelligence as important; were the data which fitted the prevailing view as to "usual" Soviet behavior. It was agreed that the whole question of the meaning for intelligence collection and analysis of the Cuban crisis belonged in the final version of the ISA paper on "Some Lessons From Cuba" -- a paper still under revision.

7. A number of further questions were raised about the present draft of this paper, including the following:

a. The precise nature of the Soviet conception with respect to both Berlin and Cuba appeared to involve the three following elements: (i) the shadow of nuclear threat over Western Europe and the US; (ii) pressure on the Free World at a point where there were underlying political differences of view which were likely to emerge under acute military pressure; and (iii) a tactic which required that the West take the first bloody military initiative; i.e., (a blockade of Berlin or the weapons actually in place

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in Cuba). Reviewing Khrushchev's policy toward Berlin in the light of the Cuba experience, it emerges that his statements indicate that all three elements appeared important to Moscow; i.e., he has repeatedly said - the West would not risk nuclear war over Berlin; the West did not really care about Berlin (notably the British and French); and the West would have to start a war over Berlin. Reviewing the Cuban crisis in the light of this view of Khrushchev's tactics, it emerges that the quarantine at sea, which did not involve immediate combat and bloodshed, placed Khrushchev in precisely the dilemma in which he had hoped to place the West; that is, the dilemma of having to initiate bloody combat in the shadow of possible nuclear war. The political unity generated over Cuba in Latin America and elsewhere also appears as a critical element in the light of this tripartite conception of basic Soviet tactics.

b. The final paragraph in the paper "Some Lessons from Cuba" was judged deficient in that it failed to recognize the full legal and moral force given to US actions in the Caribbean by the regional political arrangements permitted under the UN Charter and carried forward in subsequent treaty and other hemispheric agreements, since the San Francisco conference of 1945. The existence of this legal and moral basis for our actions was judged an important component in giving our position great strength, both within the US and throughout the world.

c. It was agreed that ARA (which wished to include certain lessons in the crisis in Latin America) and others around the table would file with Mr. Bowen further materials to be incorporated in this paper.

3. In assessing the probable course of Soviet policy in the next stage, it was felt there was a danger that we might overestimate the Cuban affair and underestimate the

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role in Moscow's decisions of the Sino-Indian conflict and the present acute state of the Sino-Soviet split. Mr. Harvey's group will take these less parochial matters into account in a fresh review of the probable future course of Soviet policy.

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